

**SUMMARY OF THE  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2001**

The Proficiency Testing Committee of the National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Conference (NELAC) met by teleconference on September 25, 2001, at 1:00 p.m. Eastern Daylight Time (EDT). The meeting was led by its Chairperson, Ms. Barbara Burmeister of the Wisconsin State Laboratory of Hygiene. A list of action items is given in Attachment A. A list of participants is given in Attachment B. *The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the topics listed in the Agenda.*

**INTRODUCTION**

Ms. Burmeister called the Proficiency Testing Committee meeting to order after attendance roll call.

**AGENDA ITEMS**

***Minutes***

The minutes of the August 28<sup>th</sup> meeting were reviewed by the Proficiency Testing (PT) Committee and accepted with no changes.

***Status of Action Items of August 28, 2001***

#1 - Uniform Electronic Report Formats - Ongoing - This action item is deferred until the National Database issue is resolved.

#2 - Analyte Group Listing - Ongoing - This item will be discussed in today's teleconference.

#3 - Proficiency Testing Face-to-Face Meeting Details - A face-to-face meeting in the near future is not possible. There are issues regarding travel funds and travel safety.

***PT Reporting Limits and Revised Field of PT Tables***

Ms. Nettrour was unavailable for this meeting and this topic was deferred for update and discussion until the next scheduled teleconference.

### ***Analyte Groups Subcommittee Report***

Ms. Haynes was delayed so Mr. Mudambi presented an update of the Analyte Group Subcommittee. The draft analyte groups sent to the committee were developed from the reporting list of compounds and not the spiking list. Analyte groups will be done for 3 matrices - drinking water, non-potable water and solids. The groups will be combined as far as possible based on PT sample formulations and laboratory analytical practices. The subcommittee is in the process of obtaining information from PT providers regarding how the PT samples are made and laboratories regarding how the PT samples are analyzed (Is each ampule spiked, extracted and analyzed separately or together?). Pass/fail criteria were briefly discussed and the subcommittee will evaluate the newly ratified scoring criteria language in Section C.5.3 (80% passing) when developing the analyte groups. Ms. Haynes, Mr. Ralph Obenauf and Mr. Mudambi, will continue their discussion and report their feedback at the next scheduled teleconference.

### ***Analyte and Method Code SOP***

The discussion of the analyte and method code SOP was continued from a prior meeting since two committee members had concerns. Because of the multitude of analytes and methods available, one committee member felt that there needs to be guidance before a new analyte or method is given a code. In the current numbering system (for drinking and wastewater especially), there could be an ASTM method, Standard method, or USGS method, all of which could be equivalent methods or reference the same EPA method. Should methods that offer the same technical method with subtle differences have their own method code? A question was also raised on how to code a method based on a performance based measurement system.

After much discussion, the committee determined that if this system is to evolve, guidelines are required and experimental analytes and methods also need to be in the master lists. Currently, there are no restrictions on the analyte or the method at this point. Each AA can input any analyte or method they want that may be applicable to their state. The original intent was to encompass everything so there was no need to develop a parallel coding system. The PT committee will still make an appropriate determination on a case-by-case basis. A question was raised on how a determination is made. Mr. Mike Miller will draft guidance criteria that will be discussed during the next teleconference.

### ***Finalize Face-to-Face Meeting Details and Logistics of Obtaining Problematic Acceptance Criteria***

The committee has been made aware that some acceptance criteria are generating failure rates that are not statistically supportable. Since the face-to-face meeting of the committee and stakeholders has been canceled, the committee will try to obtain this information via email. Mr. Obenauf will develop an email list of PT providers and Accrediting Authorities from past NELAC conference attendees and will distribute a list to Ms. Burmeister. Ms. Burmeister will draft a letter to the PT providers, AAs and laboratories to request data on problematic analytes with high failure rates as

well as data regarding preparation methods interfering with acceptance criteria. The draft letter will go out to the committee members for review before the next PT scheduled teleconference. Any changes to the letter will be made and the final letter should be sent out the week of October 8, 2001, asking for input by mid-November. This will allow the committee an opportunity to review the data and update attendees at the NELAC 7i Conference.

### ***EPA/NIST Items***

The letter to Mr. Henry Longest and Mr. James Hanlon of the EPA regarding revision of the EPA Criteria document and the EPA PT database is currently under review by the NELAC Board of Directors. It should be completed and sent out by September 26, 2001. Ms. Burmeister will email the final letter to the PT Committee upon receipt.

Ed Kantor, recently named the Executive Secretary for NELAC, has been tasked to request the NELAC contractor to do a feasibility study on the cost of reformatting and maintaining the EPA PT database. The contractor will have 30 days to complete this effort after request has been made.

### ***Comments/Questions Received***

The committee discussed concerns brought to the committee by Mr. Ted Lyter, Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection regarding orthophosphate acceptance criteria. Ms. Burmeister indicated that this is also a problem for providers and laboratories as well. Orthophosphate will be added to the list of problematic analytes.

Ms. Sharon Mertens of the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District sent a question regarding proficiency testing for total PCBs. Their permit requires total PCB as congeners on outfalls and surface water. They typically outsource the analysis to a lab that does PCB analysis using Method 1668 or 8082 and who analyze their PTs by Aroclor rather than congeners using method 8082. She finds this inconsistent and wonders how NELAC will deal with this in the future. The committee is not aware of any NIST NVLAP PT providers that offer PT samples for method 1668 (congener specific analysis of PCBs) at the present time. Most just offer Aroclor specific PT samples by methods 8080, 8082 - GC/ECD or 4020 - immunoassay. The committee feels that as the laboratory demand for congener specific PCB grows, so will accreditation for congener specific PCB grow and demand for PT samples. Mr. Mudambi will draft a reply to Ms. Mertens and email it to Ms. Burmeister.

Mr. Vince Donndelinger of Safety-Kleen sent a comment regarding PT requirements for aqueous analysis using RCRA methods. Ms. Burmeister sent him the NELAC PT FAQ#11 recommending WP PT samples for labs who analyze ground water using RCRA methods. The newly ratified field of accreditation (matrix/technology-method/analyte-analyte group) and field of proficiency testing (matrix/technology/analyte-analyte group) will clarify the situation and will reflect better the work being done to comply with regulations. Unfortunately the 2001 standards will not take effect until 2003..

***Membership and Outreach Committee Update - Cindy Nettrour***

No update due to the absence of Ms. Nettrour.

***Other Items or Issues***

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Ms. Burmeister adjourned the meeting.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next teleconference is scheduled for October 9, 2001.

**ACTION ITEMS  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2001**

<b>Item No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Date to be Completed</b>
1	Uniform Electronic Report Format	Ongoing
2	Mr. Mike Miller will draft guidance criteria for adding analytes and methods to the master code lists.	10/09/01
3	Ms. Burmeister will email a copy of the letter sent to Mr. Longest and Mr. Hanlon regarding the EPA Criteria document and the EPA database to the committee.	ASAP
4	Mr. Obenauf and Mr. Miller will compile email addresses and email them to Ms. Burmeister.	10/09/01
5	Ms. Burmeister will draft a letter to PT providers, AAs and labs requesting data on problematic analytes.	10/02/01
6	Mr. Mudambi will draft a response to Ms. Mertens and email it to Ms. Burmeister.	

**PARTICIPANTS  
PROFICIENCY TESTING COMMITTEE MEETING  
SEPTEMBER 25, 2001**

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